

ART 34 AMDT

Amended Claims

01.09.2004

1. Method for marking an item, comprising the steps of: (87)
  - a) providing information to be applied to the item;
  - b) applying a first marking to the item corresponding to the information provided in step a), wherein said first marking is printed in covert;
  - c) reading said first marking applied in step b) and comparing it with the information provided in step a);
  - d) applying a second marking to the item if the first marking read in step c) does not correspond to the information provided in step a);wherein said item is affixed to a carrier or a transportation substrate prior to applying the first marking, and wherein said first marking, said reading of said first marking, and said second marking are performed in a continuous process.
2. Method according to claim 1 wherein said steps a) to d) are carried out in-line on an integrated equipment under the control of an electronic processor.
3. Method according to claim 1, wherein said second marking comprises the overprinting of said item with a cancellation mark.
4. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 3, wherein said first and said second markings are applied by a printing process.
5. Method according to one of the preceding claims, wherein said first marking and/or said second marking are performed

ART 34 AMDT

by a non-contact printing method, preferably selected from the group of ink-jet printing and laser marking.

6. Method according to one of the preceding claims, wherein said first marking corresponding to said information is a bar code or a matrix code.
7. Method according to one of claims 1 to 6, wherein said first marking is printed using an ink comprising a material-based security element.
8. Method according to claim 5, wherein said first marking is applied by a laser beam to a surface carrying a light- or heat-sensitive coating.
9. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 8, wherein said information is encrypted, or carries an encrypted part.
10. Method according to one of claims 1 to 9, wherein said information is read by a device selected from the group consisting of a photocell assembly, a multi-photocell-array assembly and a camera coupled to image-processing means.
11. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 10, wherein said information is generated on a remote server.
12. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 11, wherein said second marking or canceling is applied by a non-contact printing method, particularly by ink-jet printing.
13. Method according to claim 12, wherein said ink-jet printing is performed with an ink containing a vividly colored substance.

14. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 13, wherein said marking comprises a machine-readable component.
15. Method according to one of the claims 1 to 14, wherein the marked item is affixed to an article or good to mark that article or good.
16. Device for carrying out the method according to claims 1 to 15 comprising:
- a) a first unit for applying a first covert marking corresponding to information to an item which is affixed to a carrier or a transportation substrate;
  - b) a reading unit for reading said first marking and the corresponding information on said item;
  - c) an electronic processor unit for comparing said information read in step b) with said information applied in step a);
  - d) a second unit for applying a second marking to said item if said information read in step b) does not correspond to said information applied in step a),
- wherein said first unit, said reading unit, and said second unit are arranged in-line.
17. Device according to claim 16, wherein said first unit, said reading unit, and said second unit are arranged in-line as an integrated equipment and operating under the control of an electronic processor.
18. Device according to claim 16 or 17, further comprising a quality control detector unit.